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ABSTRACT

This document profiles recent successful examples of students studying and working abroad as part of the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci program, which is designed to give students across the European Union the opportunity to experience vocational training in a foreign country. The following examples are presented: (1) 3 Finnish students who received 2 weeks of on-the-job training in a social and health care unit in Denmark; (2) 2 French students who completed a yacht maintenance course in the Netherlands; (3) an Irish student who worked on a building conservation project in Venice; (4) a Spanish student who participated in a commercial aquaculture program in Ireland; (5) 25 Bulgarian students who worked in information technology jobs in Germany; (6) 15 Greek students who worked in Germany's electronic banking system; (7) 12 Hungarian students who participated in 4-week training and work placements in nursing homes in Wales; (8) 7 English students with learning difficulties who participated in a student trade fair in Belgium; and (9) a young English student who participated in a summer tourism training and a 13-week training period at a Spanish hotel. Each program description includes an overview of the program's goals and practices and the name and address of at least one contact person. (MN)

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Directorate-General for Education and Culture

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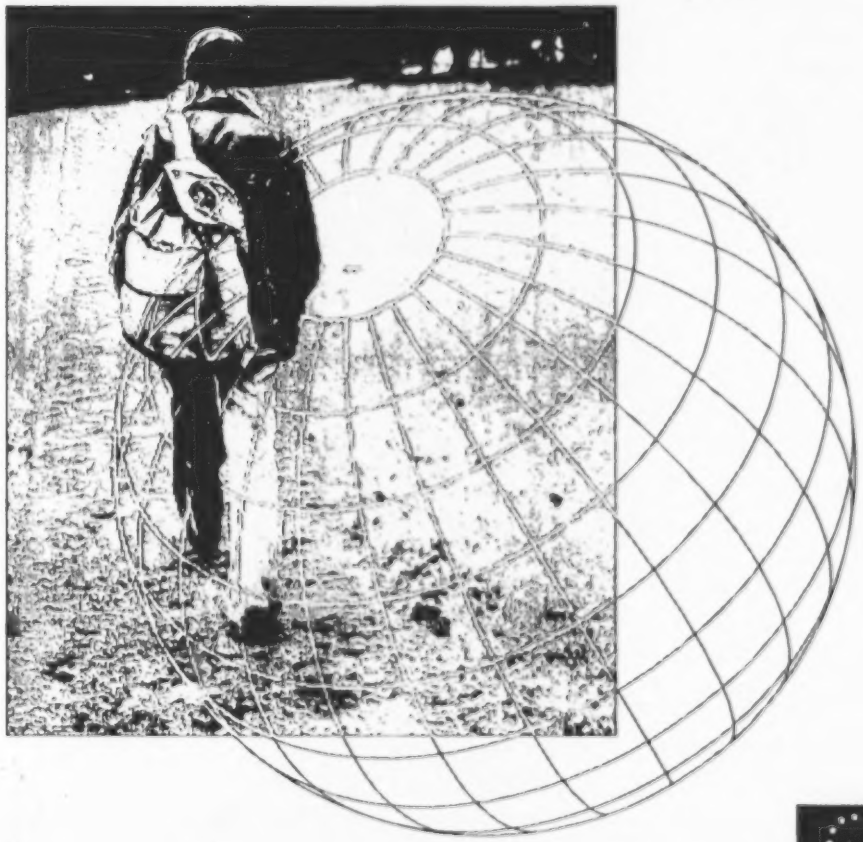
Leonardo da Vinci

Series: Good Practices ③

Studying and working abroad



European Commission

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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet.
It can be accessed through the Europa server (http://europa.eu.int).

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Our knowledge and professional skills must be regularly updated if we are to meet the new requirements of the economy and the labour market, so now, more than ever before, lifelong learning is essential for all. The Leonardo da Vinci programme, which has been the key Community instrument in the field of vocational training since 1995, provides concrete responses to these new needs.

The results of the projects supported under this programme deserve to be more widely disseminated among the vocational training community, the social partners and policy-makers. They must subsequently be adapted to other target groups, developed, used in other professional environments, and introduced into the national systems.

To this end the Directorate-General for Education and Culture, which manages the Leonardo da Vinci programme, has prepared a series of brochures called 'Leonardo da Vinci – Good practices' to inform the public of the programme's results. These brochures are designed to familiarise as many people as possible with examples of best practice under the programme. The examples presented here have been selected for their impact and originality. I am pleased to present this brochure from the Education and Culture DG, which I hope you will find interesting.

Viviane Reding
Member of the European Commission
responsible for education and culture

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Studying and working abroad

Examples of recent successful mobility projects

Thanks to the European Union's Leonardo da Vinci (1) programme, hundreds of individuals have been given the chance to experience vocational training in a foreign country. From the end of 1995 to early 2001, about 125 000 people received funding to allow them to undertake a period of work abroad. The second phase of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, in place since early 2000, aims to double the number of participants in mobility projects.

Mobility has a positive impact on many levels, for the individual, the company or organisation and also for society. Mobility projects promote the acquisition of new key skills, the ability to work in a multicultural team and a multicultural environment, knowledge of foreign languages, understanding of other cultures and greater intercultural skills.

For the individual, participating in a mobility project in a foreign country fosters independence, self-reliance, adaptability and initiative. Trainees also acquire specific vocational skills in technological areas that may be difficult to obtain in their home countries. The end result is an overall increase in participants' employability in a world where globalisation and rapid technological development has put a premium on these skills in the labour market.

While the main impact of placements involving young people is at the level of the individual, exchanges of trainers and human resource specialists have greater repercussions in terms of institutions and systems because professionals are in a position to introduce changes in the workings of their institutions. Exchanges of strategically chosen teachers and trainers offer possibilities for benchmarking and comparisons with the practices of other educational establishments, thereby fostering a climate of change.

At the broader level of society, immersion in a foreign environment promotes a better understanding of cultural differences and greater intercultural skills, most important in these days of the global village. Improved foreign language proficiency is a practical result of foreign placements and is the first step to understanding our foreign neighbours.

This brochure presents some examples of successful mobility practices carried out under the aegis of the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci programme **from 2000 to 2001**. The examples show the diversity and scope of the Leonardo da Vinci programme and provide interested readers with contact addresses of the promoters involved.

For further information on the Leonardo da Vinci programme, please consult the website:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/leonardo/leonardo2_en.html

You may also write to the following address:

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(1)
1st phase: 1995 – 1999 Council Decision of 6 December 1994
2nd phase: 2000 – 2006 Council Decision of 26 April 1999

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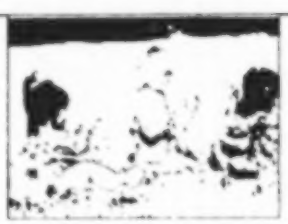
Social welfare

Three Finnish students in Denmark

The opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a foreign country is a highly valuable aspect of mobility projects. This allows students to develop their training in their chosen field in a different cultural environment. Tuusulanjärvi College, Social and Health Care Unit, is a vocational college in the training consortium of central Uusimaa, located almost 30 km north of Helsinki, which offers secondary-level vocational educational programmes for young and adult students. Here students can qualify to work in many areas of social and health care, as well as becoming youth and recreational leaders. *Social- og Sundhedsskolen Brondby* is one of the social and health care colleges in Copenhagen County. The college offers the same kind of training programmes as *Tuusulanjärvi College*, with similar qualifications. Great emphasis is placed on on-the-job training, and the college encourages cooperation with many European countries.

In this exchange project Tiina, Janne and Pauliina, from *Tuusulanjärvi College*, carried out a two-week period of on-the-job training at Social- og *Sundhedsskolen Brondby* in November 2001. Exchange students are usually third-year students who will qualify as practical nurses in child and youth care. Prior to the exchange they will have had 20 weeks of practical training in various social and health care settings. For most of their placement in Denmark, Tiina, Janne and Pauliina worked in kindergartens and recreational centres for children and young people. The project gave them the opportunity to get acquainted with another Nordic welfare state and expand their knowledge of its culture, education and social issues, as well as promoting mobility in Scandinavia. The more specific goals were:

- to learn different methods of working with children and young people from diverse cultural backgrounds in a multicultural environment;
- to learn about the various forms of social care in Denmark, with special emphasis on supporting social integration and tackling exclusion among children and young people;
- to develop skills in non-verbal communication, through working with people with whom no common language is shared;
- to develop language skills and gain self-confidence in order to be able to work both in Finland and abroad.



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Industry

Two young French students in the Netherlands

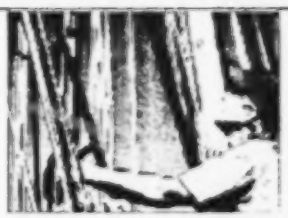
In autumn 2001, Tanguy and Erwann, two students at the lycée Saint-Gabriel de Pont l'Abbé in Finistère, Brittany, went to Edam, in the Netherlands, to undertake a placement in yacht maintenance. These students were completing their training in motor maintenance (*bac professionnel maintenance automobile*), specialising in yachts, and this placement abroad in the final year of their course (*terminale bac professionnel*) followed two periods of on-the-job training in France. The one-month Leonardo da Vinci placement was carried out with CORBA, a company in the Dutch town of Edam, which specialises in the maintenance, renovation and sale of sport and leisure craft. This four-week period abroad would not have been possible without funding from the Leonardo da Vinci programme, which helps to reduce the financial burden on students' families.

In a Europe where lines are increasingly difficult to draw as regards employment, language learning is proving to be essential. This is certainly the case in Brittany, where in summer many 'foreign' customers turn up in the garages and appreciate the fact that these technicians speak foreign languages on a daily basis. In addition, in the car maintenance sector, technology is becoming increasingly standardised (for example in terms of engine types). By choosing to undertake a short period of technical training (vocational training certificate, technical baccalaureate), these students who had previously been failing in their studies were now doing well and had gained a sense of self-worth, giving them a greater taste for learning and for tackling new situations.

A placement abroad gives *young* volunteers an advantage over their fellow students who do not apply, as it makes them more employable. It gives them self-confidence (which is evident in oral language examinations) by allowing them to make the most of their personal qualities and vocational skills. It makes them more self-assured in their search for their first job (they are more assertive at job interviews), lays the foundations for professional freedom (they deal with customers more confidently and are more dynamic at work), and makes them aware of the need for lifelong learning and the importance of a knowledge of languages.

The impact is no less significant for the *company*. Setting up a multi-disciplinary team to implement the programme involves bringing together administrative staff and colleagues from other sectors on a common project and firmly establishing the company's will to open up to Europe in the long term. This experience also helps to forge closer links between young people, families, companies and local representatives, as well as providing personal fulfilment for the teachers who volunteer to take part in the project.

The 'European' profile of job applicants in Europe is thus formed at school and in companies, outside of national borders.



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Art, architecture and management

An Irish student in Venice

Hibernia European Leonardo Placements is a project which brings together Ireland's largest third-level educational institutions with a view to promoting cooperation between industry and universities in order to meet skills needs. It responds directly to the Leonardo Programme's objectives: to *improve the quality of training and access to training, and to develop its contribution to innovation.* Hibernia Learning Partnership coordinates the Leonardo da Vinci programme for 19 higher education institutes in Ireland, distributing Leonardo da Vinci grants to each college according to their needs.

Students benefit from the Leonardo programme by:

- experiential learning;
- increasing their intercultural awareness;
- developing language skills;
- working in another cultural environment and meeting the challenges this presents.

University College Dublin is part of Hibernia's network and it was through the Hibernia project 'Hibernia Leonardo Placements' that Emmeline received funding to go on placement with the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, Italy.

Emmeline is a student of University College Dublin (UCD), Ireland, where she is studying for her Masters in Urban & building conservation. It was the UCD international office which processed Emmeline's application.

Emmeline followed in the footsteps of many of her UCD colleagues who also worked in the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in the past, travelling to Italy and gaining excellent experience. One such student is Sheena from UCD, who worked in the Peggy Guggenheim Museum on placement in the year 2000. She had responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the museum, and as there are no museum training courses in Ireland this was especially valuable experience for her.

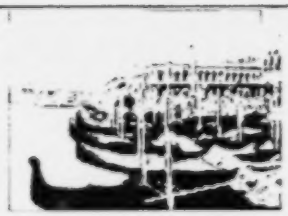
An extract from Sheena's report:

'I also gave guided tours of the collection in both English and French and had the incredible opportunity to give a tactile tour of the sculpture garden to blind visitors. I also gave a number of daily presentations of specific works from the collection and was responsible for encouraging new interns to do the same, and ensuring the public were aware that such presentations were taking place.'– Sheena

Each student on the intern programme is expected to give a seminar to the museum group on topics relating to modern art or related topics, as a learning transfer.

During her three-month placement, in the autumn of 2001, Emmeline had responsibility for:

- preparing, maintaining and staffing the gallery;
- assisting with administrative matters;
- assisting with exhibition installations;
- participating in twice weekly modern art/art criticism seminars;
- participating in study visits to museums, sites and exhibitions in and outside Venice.



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Science and the environment

A Spanish student in Ireland

AquaTT is a non-profit organisation comprised of a European network of universities and enterprises cooperating in the aquaculture sector, and its aim is to support the strategic goals of the aquaculture industry by facilitating collaborative university/industry action in education, training, technology transfer, research and development.

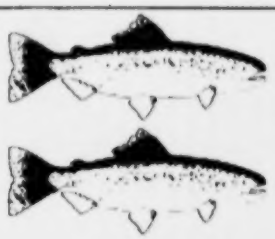
The AquaTT student placement programme funded by the Leonardo da Vinci Programme has proved to be one of the most popular projects in the AquaTT network. This unique scheme provides financial assistance (mobility grants) for aquaculture students and recent graduates to complete vocational training placements in commercial aquaculture companies. Students not only gain valuable work experience, but also have the opportunity to travel, live and work in another cultural environment. Feedback from students who have participated in the programme has been excellent and cites improved language skills, personal development and social aspects as added bonuses to the work experience and training.

Alberto, a recent graduate from the Agricultural University of Barcelona, applied for a grant from AquaTT to gain experience on a finfish farm in order to apply his theoretical knowledge of aquaculture in a practical setting. Alberto's degree in Agriculture techniques led him to have a specific interest in aquaculture, a growing industry with commercial potential in his home country.

Alberto's objectives were to 'learn about all of the stages of production on a finfish farm'. After sending out his application, he was soon offered a position for four months, from August to November 2001, by Araglen Trout Farm in County Cork, Ireland, where he carried out his placement. The supervisors at Araglen were very pleased with his work, and the placement may lead to a more permanent position.

Alberto's duties on the farm included production scheduling and harvesting. He was also required to participate in general hatchery supervision to include work with new eggs yet to arrive in the hatchery. Alberto was able to return to Spain with a comprehensive understanding of the technical and managerial aspects of working on a fish farm, with specific knowledge of trout farming. This will not only increase his employability but will make his studies more relevant now that he has hands-on experience in this field.

AquaTT maintains a network throughout 22 European countries, building relationships in the European aquaculture sector, including industry bodies, trade and training associations, research institutes, governmental laboratories and development agencies, universities, SMEs and aquaculture-related service providers.



For further information on AquaTT, please contact:

Rachel Fee or **David Murphy**
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Dublin 1
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E-mail: aquatt@aquatt.ie

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Electronics and communication

Bulgarian students in Germany

In all, 25 Bulgarian students from the Technical School of Electronics in Sofia had the opportunity to go to Germany from 5 September to 3 October 2001, through the 'Mobility in the field of Electronics and Communication, Mobelcom 2000' programme. The programme had two basic goals. Firstly, the students were to gain practical experience in information technology under the most modern conditions possible. They were not only to be given an idea of what working in Germany was like but also to be shown that it was possible to work in another European country, and to learn how mobility could bring Europeans closer together. Secondly, they were to experience German culture from an insider's perspective.

Their stay was divided into two parts. The first few weeks were spent working, and the last week was reserved for a socio-cultural programme, including several trips to different cities, to allow the students to learn more about present-day Germany.

The group was extremely well prepared. In addition to their extensive knowledge of computer-related issues, everyone in the group had studied German in a two-month preparatory course in Bulgaria. The receiving partner, Vitalis, was able to place all participants with Lintec Computer AG. Lintec is an international company working in hardware, software and IT services. Three weeks of practical training with Lintec provided the participants with a taste of what it can be like to adapt to a foreign labour market within a relatively short time. They were given various opportunities to participate directly in the production of modern electronics. The group also learned how work is organised in Germany. They learned about production management and marketing modern electronic products. After the three weeks, mutual respect had grown between the students and the Lintec employees. The professionals considered the students well qualified to become computer specialists. The Bulgarian students enjoyed their work all the more, because the information they were given fitted in exactly with their study subjects in Bulgaria.

As mentioned above, a socio-cultural programme was organised for the final week. It not only gave the students the opportunity to visit towns in Saxony, but also improved their knowledge of German history. The week included a three-day trip to Berlin, where recent history was brought to life by a visit to both sides of the former Berlin Wall and a visit to the German Parliament. The students also visited Leipzig. In addition, they traced the works of poets Goethe and Schiller in Weimar and visited the Saxon capital, Dresden.

In conclusion, the placement in Germany will add to the success of an ambitious task – to train highly-qualified electronics specialists who will be competitive in the labour market all over Europe and sufficiently qualified for admission to technical universities in Bulgaria and elsewhere.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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Future bank services – Electronic exchanges

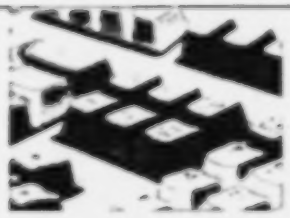
Greek trainees in Germany

A group from the Vocational Training Institute IEK Nikaias, Greece, had the opportunity of learning about the German banking system, and seeing something of German life, from 12 October to 1 November 2001. The goal of the group was twofold. Rather than participating in a normal working day, they wanted to learn how banking works in Germany and what the future of banking might look like in Greece. Although Greece has long been a member of the European Union, the banking system has retained a traditional approach.

One challenge for the group of 15 trainees was to become familiar with the German banking system, as well as the possible future of European banking, especially in view of the transition to the euro. Another challenge was language, as neither the participants nor the teacher accompanying them spoke German, nor were there funds for a language course. Because of this, a different approach was taken to make the programme work. English was used as a vehicular language but, when necessary, an interpreter was used to interpret from German into Greek. A seminar was held by a professor from Leipzig University who explained the basics of German banking. This gave the students the background necessary to understand subsequent sessions, which included meetings with experts from different banks who explained their different products and services. Special attention was given to international transactions and future technologies, such as online and telephone banking. The students learned about the running of call centres for private and corporate clients. In the course of several seminars, participants had the chance to reflect on the differences between Greek and German banking, as well as differences in the education of future bank employees. Topics discussed included whether one national banking system might be adapted by another country or what aspects would have to be adjusted in order to develop a European banking system.

The Greek students were also interested in seeing more of Germany. They went on a tour of Leipzig, famously associated with the composer Johann Sebastian Bach, as well as a three-day trip to Berlin where they visited historic national monuments and museums.

On the whole, the group not only got an impression of what their workplace might look like, but also what it would be like to live in another European country.



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Health care

Placements for 12 young Hungarians in Wales

The Ferenczi Sándor Secondary Vocational School for Health Care, in Miskolc, is the biggest vocational training institution in the field in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county. The school has been involved in the process of modernising Hungarian vocational health care training since the early 1990s. As its curriculum meets European standards, its aim is to give its students the opportunity to apply their knowledge in another country, gaining experience in European health care.

Its partner institution, the University of Wales in Bangor, was willing to receive 12 students from the school, providing vocational practice for them in the departments of the North Wales Nursing and Residential Homes Association.

After taking part in linguistic and cultural preparation courses, the 12 students and their accompanying teachers began their four-week placements on 1 March 2001. The young nurses spent the first two weeks in guided clinical nursing, in medicine and surgery, in Bupa Yale Hospital. They then spent two weeks in guided nursing in Pendine Park Nursing Home, where they were involved in the daily work of three different departments: the disabled, the elderly and the mentally handicapped.

Reactions from the students were positive:

- They learned new ways of communicating between caregivers and patients;
- They learned new methods of nursing administration and work organisation;
- They learned how to use modern nursing materials;
- They became familiar with the UK health care system;

The students were well integrated in both the hospital and the nursing home. They were involved in the nursing process and they had the opportunity to illustrate their skills, to the satisfaction of both nurses and patients.

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'Jeunes entreprises' – a student trade fair

English students in Belgium

A partnership project between Park Lane College, Stonegate Special School and Elmete Wood Special School enabled seven young people with learning difficulties to participate in work experience in Belgium by allowing them to participate in 'Jeunes Entreprises' (a student trade fair) in Louvain in February 1998. The young students were undertaking a basic-level retail programme at College and for the purpose of the work experience had set up their own company called Bright Sparks, which would exhibit and sell at the Student International Trade Fair in Louvain. The students participating had no – or very limited – literacy skills. The students' statements quoted below were recorded on tape.

Michelle, one of the trainees, said 'We decided as a company to make potpourri and candles, we made lavender bags as well, but they did not do as well as the earrings from before. We also took mugs, spinner clips and magic mats.' Michelle was asked what she felt were the real benefits of the trip and said, 'I enjoyed the trip as I got to meet other people. We had a real trading experience and I enjoyed watching other students making and selling stuff. It helped me to get my VAC (Vocational Access Certificate) certificate because of the selling as we got lots of trading experience. I also enjoyed going abroad as I have not been abroad before'. The tutor and support worker at Park Lane College said 'The experiences gained by students with learning difficulties or disabilities when making these trips are of the highest order. They are experiences that it is not possible to gain in their home country. It helped to train students to have a better understanding of monetary values and exchange rates, to have a basic grasp of a few words of the language, particularly French, but also a small number of Flemish words. This led to discussions and training on the cultural differences between the two cultures of people in Belgium and people in our own country.'

Michelle is now living independently and works in a retail outlet on a part-time basis.

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Travel and tourism

A young English student in Spain

Ryan, from the Seacroft area of Leeds, started at Park Lane College on the Intermediate Leisure and Tourism course in September 1997, having very little in the way of academic qualifications. He struggled to settle in during the first term of his studies, having only come to college because he was unable to secure employment.

After a rocky start he worked hard throughout the rest of the year and was successful in progressing to the advanced GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) in Travel & Tourism with Animation options, a goal that he had set himself in the second term of the intermediate course. It is fair to say that he struggled with the workload of the course but, particularly after working for Marina Balear Hotels in Mallorca on a Leonardo da Vinci funded placement for students, in the summer of 1999, he realised that completing the course would allow him to achieve his ambitions. He managed to complete the course early and was able to return to Mallorca at Easter 2000, initially on a Leonardo da Vinci placement for young workers, and was then employed by Marina Balear Hotels on completion of the 13-week placement training period.

In summer 2000 Ryan received the college 'Student of the Year Award' which was presented to him by the owner of the Marina Balear Hotel chain in front of the 'Passport to the Sun' television cameras. Last year Ryan was appointed as the Head Entertainer in their hotel in Alcudia, heading up a team of five, where he was responsible for all aspects of the running of the entertainment programme.

The college placements coordinator Jonathan Smith said 'It makes my work very satisfying to have former students of ours progressing so well in these roles. This is doubly rewarding in Ryan's case as he is now supervising and developing our current students.'

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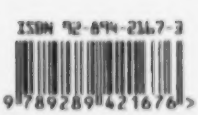

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